

“Brother Joseph Is Truly A Wonderful Man, He Is All We Could Wish a Prophet to Be”: Pre-1844 Letters of William Law

Lyndon W. Cook

Although now seldom recognized as being anything more than a bitter apostate, William Law was for several years a Church member of considerable faith. Born in Northern Ireland in 1809, William immigrated to America with his family about ten years later, finally settling in Mercer County, Pennsylvania. He later moved to Churchville, Ontario, Canada, where he owned and operated a mill and served as local postmaster. Here in Upper Canada William married Canadian-born Jane Silverthorn, who bore him eight children. It was here that William Law was converted to the Church in 1836 through the efforts of John Taylor and Almon W. Babbitt.

Located nearly twenty-five miles northwest of Toronto, Churchville was for a time recognized as a major stronghold of Mormonism in Upper Canada, and William Law appears to have presided over the Churchville branch after his ordination to elder by Parley P. Pratt on 24 April 1837. Some of William's close Mormon friends in Churchville and neighboring settlements were the Jacob Scott family, Robert B. Thompson, James Mulholland, and the Edward Lawrence family, all of whom would have interesting relationships with the Prophet in Nauvoo, Illinois.

After the major Mormon exodus from Kirtland in 1838, many Canadian Saints, possessed of a gathering spirit, made preparations to remove to Far West, Missouri. William Law, however, was unable to dispose of his business concerns in Upper Canada until 1839, when Nauvoo had become the new gathering place. Bent on gathering with the Saints, William led a seven-wagon caravan of Canadian Saints to Nauvoo, arriving the first week of November 1839. Nauvoo would be home for William and his family until the summer of 1844.

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William wasted little time putting down roots at Nauvoo. With his brother Wilson as partner, he purchased properties, opened a store, and proceeded to build a mill. He saw in the large influx of Mormons to Nauvoo an opportunity to personally take advantage of the economic growth of the community, and though not rich, William became a man of means, possessing some influence and power, particularly among many of the Canadian converts then settling in the Mormon city. His abilities soon came to the notice of the Prophet Joseph Smith, who with divine confirmation selected him as a counselor in the First Presidency in 1841. For nearly three years William Law served in this high position with dignity, making two important missions to the eastern states. Though the Prophet and William did not always see eye to eye politically and had divergent, even conflicting, financial interests, they did nevertheless, maintain a relative stability in the Presidency. By the summer of 1842, primarily because of his ecclesiastical position, William was drawn into the Prophet's inner circle and introduced to additional sacred truths. When weighed in the balance, however, to test his faith, William faltered.

By the fall of 1843, William had become convinced that the Prophet had abused his authority in the matter of plural marriage. A complete and permanent rupture between William Law and Joseph Smith had occurred by Christmas 1843, when William opted to side with other disaffected Mormons who opposed the Prophet. In addition to rejecting the principle of plural marriage, William Law and other dissidents balked at two other of the Prophet's teachings—a plurality of Gods and unconditional sealing up unto eternal life. By the spring of 1844 William and his cohorts had determined not merely to leave Mormonism behind, but to publicly denounce Joseph Smith's private teachings, which they called doctrines of devils. After their excommunication in April 1844, William and his brother, with others, established a printing office and issued one number of a paper called the *Nauvoo Expositor*, 7 June 1844. By publication of personal statements and sworn testimony, they sought to expose Joseph Smith to Nauvoo Mormons and to publicly traduce his character. The city council's decision to defend Joseph and to destroy the printing press as a public nuisance had far-reaching effects, ultimately resulting in the death of the Prophet.

Menaced by angry Mormons, the Laws left Nauvoo in June 1844. Traveling north, up the Mississippi River, they settled first at Burlington, then at Rock Island, later near Galena, Illinois. In 1866 the Laws moved a final time, across the Illinois border into Wisconsin,

William had become involved in the practice of medicine. At Shullsburg he established a fairly successful medical practice which he maintained until his death on 12 January 1892. But he remained estranged from the Church.

The following six letters, written by William Law while he was still a member in good standing, breathe a spirit of faith and brotherly concern for his fellow members in the restored gospel. Concerning the missionary efforts of Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, Isaac Russell, and others in England in 1837, William Law wrote: "I rejoice that so many are likely to join the Church in England, I trust that they will prove faithful that we may all meet in Zion from every clime" (see letter dated 10 November 1837). Similarly the letters reflect William's conviction that Joseph Smith was a divinely called prophet. Penned at a time when Mormon dissenters throughout the Church, including William Law's close friend and once idol Isaac Russell, were denouncing Joseph Smith as a fallen prophet, the correspondence goes far in its defense of Joseph Smith. After living in close proximity to Joseph Smith for a year in Nauvoo, William wrote of the Prophet: "I have carefully watched his movements since I have been here, and I assure you I have found him honest and honourable in all our transactions which have been very considerable. I believe he is an honest upright man" (see letter dated 29 November 1840).

Our knowledge of William Law's later disaffection should not discolor his earlier good deeds. Nor should it distort our understanding of the man nor lessen our appreciation of his early championing of Mormonism. These letters preserve for us an important insight into a man and a cause. Chosen as counselor in the First Presidency and being one of nine men to whom the Prophet Joseph Smith first administered the endowment in 1842 speaks well for William Law's earlier efforts for the cause of truth.

Mr. Isaac Russel¹
City of Toronto

Churchville² May 12th '37.

Dear Friend & Brother

I this day had the pleasure of hearing from you by Mr. Turley,³ he says you intend to remain in Toronto for a few days. I therefore write you, or rather request that you will allow Mrs. Russel⁴ and Children to spend a few weeks at Churchville, we will be extremely happy of the addition to our family till your return from Kirtland—I really wish you would have her and the Children to stay with us till your return, they will be no trouble but a pleasure, therefore do not deny my request—You know that mail comes here on Friday, therefore if you will write me what time Mrs. Russel would be at the mouth of the Credit⁵ I would send down a team for her, or I could send a waggon to Toronto for them which ever you would prefer.

Mrs. Law⁶ wishes Mrs. Russel to stop with ~~with~~ her till you come back, and you know she will be safe here, so just write me and I will send down to the City for her and the children which I think the best way—'tis better than going on the boat,

There has nothing of moment occurred since I saw you,

We are as well as usual thanks to the Giver of every good and perfect gift—

Perhaps you will come and see us again before you go away.—⁷

Please Remember me to the Friends, And believe me yours

Most Affectionately,

Wm. Law.

Churchville, U.C.
May 12th '37

Wm. Law PM
Free

¹Isaac Russell (1807–1844), the son of William Russell and Isabella Peart, was born 13 April 1807, in Windy Hall, Cumberland County, England. His family immigrated to Upper Canada in 1817. Isaac married Mary Walton, also from Cumberland County, in 1823. They settled in Toronto where he was converted to the Church by Parley P. Pratt. Isaac Russell accompanied Heber C. Kimball and others on the first British mission in 1837, where he had much success in his native land of Cumberland County. After returning from England, Isaac settled in Far West, Missouri, in 1838. He became convinced that Joseph was a fallen prophet. He influenced several Canadian as well as British Saints to leave the Church. Isaac Russell died in Richmond, Ray County, Missouri, 25 September 1844. (See *HC*, 2:494; see also Joseph Fielding Journal, Church Archives.)

²The community of Churchville, for a time one of the strongest branches of the Church in Upper Canada, was situated on the Credit River, about twenty-five miles northwest of Toronto. A post office was established in 1837 with William Law as postmaster.

³Theodore Turley (1801–1871) joined the Church in Upper Canada. He operated a gunsmith shop in Nauvoo.

⁴Mary Walton Russell (1811–1864) was the daughter of John Walton and Ann Millican and the wife of Isaac Russell.

⁵The Credit River.

⁶Jane Silverthorn Law (1814–1882), wife of William Law.

⁷"Go away," i.e., to England. This is an early reference to the plans of several Canadian converts to preach the gospel to friends and relatives in England.

Isaac Russell
Care of Mr. Jackson Wanless
Alston Post Office
Cumberland, England

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Churchville Nov. 10th 1837.

My Dear Friend

I had a short time ago the pleasure of receiving your kind Epistle, which gave much joy to your friends in this neighbourhood, I need not say how glad I was to find you well, and the work of Our Lord prospering, you had a very favourable voyage, an[d] although trials persecutions, privations and sorrows await the Saints, yet God will not forsake them; yea, in the hour of their greatest need, he will stand by them to deliver.

You wish to know how we stand here, I shall tell you how we appear to stand, (but God knoweth the heart,) all who belong to this branch are faithful I believe, but Bro. Hunter & Sister Bell, who appear to me to be rather doubtful, however I wont judge,

I baptized Isaac and Robert Scott,⁹ so you see the old man¹⁰ has all his sons,—The old lady¹¹ and Sarah¹² are still obstinate. John Scott's¹³ brotherinlaw has joined the Church also, George Nelson's Mother is also a member,¹⁴ Mrs. Graham stands fast in the faith I believe, and I have heard but little of Mrs. McKnoll, The little branch down at Bro. Larances¹⁵ has not lived up to their privileges, but I hope they will do better for the future. Mrs. Rowse and her mother went to Rochester some time ago, the old Lady is not what we took her to be I am afraid, but God knoweth, therefore I dare not condemn,

Bro. Turley¹⁶ and Bro. Thompson¹⁷ have built up a little branch in the upper part of Chyugeonsy[?]¹⁸ of 12 members, Mrs. Thompson¹⁹ has resided with us for some weeks, She is very anxious to hear from her brother²⁰ who went with you—

⁸Isaac Russell and John Snyder, after arriving with others of the British mission in Preston, England, in July 1837, were assigned to preach in Alston, Cumberland County, England.

⁹Isaac and Robert Scott were sons of Jacob and Sarah Warnock Scott. Isaac married Sarah H. Hall in Nauvoo 17 March 1844. Isaac and Sarah were influenced by William Law to leave the Church in 1844. (See George F. Partridge, ed., "The Death of a Mormon Dictator—Letters of Massachusetts Mormons, 1843–1848," *The New England Quarterly* [December 1936].)

¹⁰Jacob Scott, born in Armagh, Ireland, was baptized in Churchville on 22 March 1837 by Isaac Russell. He died in Nauvoo 2 January 1845.

¹¹Sarah Warnock Scott, wife of Jacob Scott.

¹²Sarah Scott was the daughter of Jacob and Sarah Warnock Scott.

¹³John Scott (1811–1876) was the son of Jacob and Sarah Warnock Scott. He married Elizabeth Menerey. John Scott died a member of the Church at Millcreek, Utah.

¹⁴George Nelson, his mother, and other members of the family became converts to the Church in Upper Canada, moved to Far West, Missouri, where they were influenced by Isaac Russell's apostasy and were excommunicated on 26 April 1839. They later settled in Nauvoo.

¹⁵The Edward Lawrence family included his wife Margaret and at least six children: Sarah, Maria, Henry, Nelson, James, and Julia. After the death of her husband and the family's move to Nauvoo, Margaret married Josiah Butterfield.

¹⁶Theodore Turley.

¹⁷Robert Blashel Thompson (1811–1841) joined the Church in Upper Canada in 1826. He served as the Prophet's scribe from 1839 to 1841.

¹⁸The word is nearly illegible.

¹⁹Mercy Rachel Fielding Thompson, sister of Joseph Fielding.

²⁰Joseph Fielding (1797–1863) was baptized in Upper Canada in 1836.

Your Sisters in Toronto are well, and stand fast in the faith, desiring to be remembered to you, Mrs. Walton²¹ was over in Kirtland a short time ago, and wishes me to say to you that your wife is well, and appears to be more comfortable and contented than she has seen her for some time—your children are in good health &c—We had the blessing of a visit from Bro. Joseph Smith Jr. and Bro. Sidney Rigdon, they were here for four or five days,²² from whom we received much information, one thing I would mention he says we have a right to administer to such as Sister Graham, who is prevented by their husbands from baptism, we may confirm such and give the Sacrament &c.—

Bro Joseph is truly a wonderful man he is all we could wish a prophet to be—and Bro. Sidney what Eloquence is his, and think how he has sacrificed for the Truth.

I rejoice that so many are likely to join the Church [in?]²³ England, I trust they will prove faithful that we may all meet in Zion from every C[lime?]²⁴ Bro. Babbit²⁵ & Taylor²⁶ are labouring below Toronto and and the Lord is bringing many in.

You ask me if I would join you in your labours and be your Companion in the work. I would rather travel with you as than any other one, when I do travel, but I think I shall be directed by the Presidency to what quarter of the world I shall go—. I do not know how soon my way will be open but when it is I shall go forth in the strength of Jacob's God—

I am aware we must endure affliction, but I wont shrink from my calling though I should have to sacrifice all things—

The difficulties at Kirtland are all settled²⁷ and the high minded ones have become humble, Mr. Scott²⁸ and family send their Love to you, Mrs. Law²⁹ & Mrs. Thompson³⁰ send their love to you, and all your old friends wish to be remembered to you, if Bro. Snider³¹ is with you remember me to him, and tell him his family is well &c. I believe we will have a rebellion in the Lower Province and perhaps in this [i.e., Upper Canada]³²—I suppose Bro. Turly told you that he sold and will move off next spring &c.—I would go very thankful if you would write me soon again, as I am very desirous to hear from you often—

Mrs. Walton wishes you to ask Robert Walton if there is anything coming from the Holyfield Lead Mine now, and mention it when you

²¹Undoubtedly Isabell Walton, sister of Isaac Russell and one of Parley P. Pratt's first converts in Toronto in 1836.

²²The Prophet's visit to Upper Canada occurred in August 1837, where he was engaged "in visiting the churches in Canada, preaching, baptizing, blessing the Saints and strengthening the branches" (HC, 2:508).

²³Torn.

²⁴Torn.

²⁵Almon W. Babbitt (1813–1856).

²⁶John Taylor (1808–1887) became a convert to the Church in Upper Canada in 1836.

²⁷Widespread apostasy in Kirtland in 1837.

²⁸Jacob Scott.

²⁹Jane Silverthorn Law.

³⁰Mercy Rachel Fielding Thompson, sister of Joseph Fielding.

³¹John Snyder (1800–1875) was baptized in Upper Canada in 1836.

³²In 1837 revolts broke out in both Upper (Ontario) and Lower (Quebec) Canada with rebels demanding responsible government from the British. While the uprisings were a military fiasco, they play no small part in bringing about the 1839 Durham Report: a constitutional document which proposed the unification of Upper and Lower Canada and the establishment of a popularly elected legislature with ultimate authority (see R. MacGregor Dawson, *The Government of Canada* [Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1970], pp. 11–12).

write.—And that the God of our Fathers may always bless, comfort and deliver you is the prayer of your Brother in the Bonds of the Ever lasting Gospel of Christ,

/s/ Wm. Law.

[vertically along the margin] I wish very much to see you but I suppose you wont return for some time. Remember me in your prayers and I shall you—

Georgetown Mercer Cy. Pa.
January 17th 1839

Dear Brother

It is now near three months since I wrote to Sister Walton³³ & Bro Snider³⁴ and also to Bro. Thompson,³⁵ I have looked for a reply with the utmost anxiety but have not heard a word from any of you yet, perhaps my Letters did not reach you,

Please tell Sister Walton that Mary Ann³⁶ is in good health and would be quite content if we had a Letter from her brother shewing that you are all well &c. I was detained here in the fall waiting from day to day for some money which I expected from Canada but which has not even yet come to hand but will in a short time, I have some prospect of selling out in Canada as the Estate will be divided this winter, at all events I shall have enough to take us up in the spring³⁷ & a little over—Tell Sister Walton that I regret exceedingly that I did not get up to Missouri on account of Mary Ann least she should need her, but it was out of my power.³⁸ I shall take as good care of Mary Ann as if she were my own child we live in a comfortable rented house and I keep my teams at work, so we are getting along very well &c.—

We have heard of much trouble in Missouri which I suppose is true in part—the Missourians are determined to drive our people all out of the State but I trust the Lord will not suffer it to be so, I fear there has been wickedness in the Camp, but I hope this chastisement will be for the good of all, I wish very much to hear what the latest revelations say about these things, for if the Church will ask the Lord no doubt he will make known his will to them and tell them how to act &c. &c.

I wrote to Bro. Snider and requested him to be so good as to let Sister Walton have forty dollars if he would and I will would settle with him for it in the spring when I come up, if Bro. Snider did not get my

³³Isabella Walton.

³⁴John Snyder.

³⁵Robert B. Thompson.

³⁶Mary Ann Walton appears to be the daughter of Isabella Walton.

³⁷"Up" to Missouri.

³⁸Mary Ann Walton appears to have traveled to Nauvoo with William Law's family in late 1839. Robert Walton, undoubtedly her brother, came to Nauvoo from Far West, Missouri, to "fetch" Mary Ann in October 1839. See Leonora Taylor to John Taylor, October 1839, Church Archives.

Letter please mention this to him and if he can spare the money I would be very glad to have it given Sister Walton as she has no one to help her to work, tell her that Mary Ann had a Letter from John Walton³⁹ he is in Canada and said he would come up to Missouri, he cut his foot badly while in Ohio or Indiana and when it got well his money was done, and I suppose he was discouraged and thought he would go home, so he worked along from place to place till he got back, but I suppose he will come up next summer to Missouri—

Sister Walton might send me an order on Mr. Milburn for any rents or moneys that may be in his hands, as perhaps I may go over in a month or two, and could bring it to her.—

I wish you would write to me as soon as you get this and tell me all the news &c.

I would like to know how Bro. Snider lost his horses and which ones he lost.

Tell Father Scott⁴⁰ to write me and tell Bros. Mulholland⁴¹ and Turley,⁴² and all my old friends who are writers to write me. I cant get Letters enough.

I have preached a little and intend to preach more, I baptised one in this place—

We enjoy pretty good health thanks be to our heavenly father for all his mercies—

One of my brothers⁴³ thought of going up with me in the spring and taking a store of goods, I wish you would let me know how it would answer he is a strong advocate for our doctrines and will I hope eventually be a member of the Church at present I have very little hope of the rest of my brothers but the Lord can turn any heart from the error of education—

My mother⁴⁴ died a few weeks ago after many years of sickness which she bore patiently—

My father⁴⁵ is much opposed to these things from evil reports &c. which he has heard—

The Hicks⁴⁶ are here and intend going up in the spring—

The evil reports which we hear did not discourage us, as we know in whom we trust, we are determined to hold out to the end though we may have to suffer all things—

I hope you will not forget us in your prayers—

Remember us to all our friends with devoted love—

Mary Anns love to all her f[r]iends,

³⁹John Walton appears to have been Mary Ann's brother.

⁴⁰Jacob Scott.

⁴¹James Mulholland (1804–1839) was born in Ireland and was converted to the Church in Upper Canada. He served as Joseph Smith's scribe from 1838 to 1839.

⁴²Theodore Turley.

⁴³Wilson Law (1807–1877). William was the youngest of five brothers. Contrary to William's later statements, his brother Wilson was baptized and ordained an elder in Nauvoo. Joseph Smith married Wilson Law and Elizabeth F. Sikes on 25 December 1842 at Nauvoo. Elizabeth died in Nauvoo 31 March 1844. (See Joseph Smith Diary, 31 March 1844, Church Archives.)

⁴⁴Mary Wilson Law.

⁴⁵Richard Law.

⁴⁶Possibly William Hicks or John A. Hicks.

Direct your letters to Mercer Post Office, Mercer County, Pennsylvania—

Believe me most affectionately

Yours in the Bonds of the Everlasting Gospel of Christ.
/s/ Wm. Law.

To Mr. Isaac Russel

Let me know whether Mr. Glines⁴⁷ is in Missouri or if you know where he and his family are, as they left Churchville for Missouri—W.L.
Do not delay writing even for a day.

Georgetown, Mercer Cy, Pa.
March 27th /39

Dear Brother

I recd. you[r] kind Letter of the 5th Feb'y, and am happy to find you well and in good faith. I judge you have stood the trial pretty well, it is wisdom in the Almighty that these things should be, that the Church might be purged and made clean, that the pure in heart alone might remain, I am glad to hear that Orson Hyde⁴⁸ has returned to the bosom of the Church and as to our other brethren who are a little out of the way I have no doubts but they will all come right again. The Devil is seeking by every means to destroy us and we should pray for each other and uphold each other by faith—I had a Letter from Bro. Russel⁴⁹ some time ago—I could not say that there was any thing in it out of the way, he said nothing against Joseph.—he said there was much pride and avariceousness in the Church, said they had broken the commandments as to obtaining an inheritance in Zion, which should be by purchase, See page 143 Doctrine & Covenants.⁵⁰ I have no doubt but there has been transgression in the Church or the Lord would not scourge them, but all things will work together for good to those who love and fear God—. And as to Joseph building a Bank at Kirtland, I look on it as like unto the affair of David being moved by God to number the people when [he was?]⁵¹ displeased with Israel,—See 2d Samuel 24 Chap. 1st. verse—So the Lord was angry with the Saints and suffered them to have the Bank as a snare that he might punish them for their love of riches and speculation &c.

When Joseph ordains another in his stead⁵² I shall be willing to receive him but not till then, but I have not the most foreign idea that

⁴⁷Undoubtedly John Glines, a Canadian convert from Churchville. He later settled near Nauvoo.

⁴⁸Orson Hyde (1805–1878) was disfellowshipped because of his disaffection in Missouri in 1838, but after sincere repentance he was restored to his position in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on 27 June 1839.

⁴⁹Isaac Russell.

⁵⁰See Doctrine and Covenants 63:27–31.

⁵¹Torn.

⁵²D&C 43:4 speaks of Joseph Smith's having authority to appoint another in his stead.

the Lord will remove Joseph from the presidency ever,—I have heard many dreadful reports about the Mormon War,⁵³ but found at last a true account of the affair in the Quincy Argus

Dear Bro. we do not live in the right generation for temporal happiness, but then the happiness and glory of that City which we seek beyond the sufferings of mortality, is such as to enable us to bear the ills of this present life with some degree of fortitude, we should be very careful to observe the commandments and to walk humbly before the Lord, and to have our whole trust placed in him, and not to trust to our own wisdom for the Devil seeketh to destroy us that Zion should not be built up but it shall be built up by the pure in heart, yea it shall yet be glorious and terrible to the praise of the Lord, and to the safety of his people—.

I hear you are married to my particular friend Sister Sarah⁵⁴—may the richest blessings of Heaven rest on your heads forever.—

As soon as I learn the fixed place of resting for the Saints I shall endeavour to move there, for I long to be with the Saints, to be gathered with the people of God, and I trust that after this chastening the Saints will strive to serve the Lord in truth and righ[t]eousness,

The inhabitants of Missouri have been filling up their cup of iniquity, and the Lord will doubtless soon bring judgments upon them, and they will be cut off that the Saints may possess the land in peace &c—

We are all well, Our love to our friends—

Yours in The Gospel of Christ

/s/ Wm. Law.

To Mr. Ja[me]s Molholland

[March 27–29, 1839]⁵⁵

Dear Brother

You see I have left but little room to write to you nor have I much to write, I am somewhat astonished at my old friends concerning the box,—but let it go so, they are paid the Am't of their claims and I revoke the order to give Sister Walton⁵⁶ & Bro. Russel⁵⁷ the contents of the box, and I beg to request of you to sell so much of the contents of it as will pay you back the \$16, Sister Thompson⁵⁸ paid on it and also for the expense of bringing it to Quincy the rest if there be any left please keep till we reach you, we are very thankful to Sister Thompson for her

⁵³Mormon extermination from Missouri 1838–1839.

⁵⁴James Mulholland married Sarah Scott, daughter of Jacob Scott and Mary Warnock Scott.

⁵⁵This letter to Robert B. Thompson was appended to the Mulholland letter and would have been written sometime between 27 March 1839 and the date of postmark, 29 March 1839.

⁵⁶Isabella Walton.

⁵⁷Isaac Russell.

⁵⁸Mercy Fielding Thompson.

care of the box, she did wisely in bringing it with her, but it was a great trouble, which we shall not forget.—

As to the Merchantile business I wish you would give me, all the information you can on that subject as early as possible as my brother⁵⁹ wishes to go to the West this season, let me know how the people pay, what kind of goods is most suitable, how much capital would be needed whether there are many stores there and where the best situation would be for doing business in that line—give me a description of the country, climate &c. &c. and tell me where the Saints are going to settle if you know, would a first rate new horsepower for grinding and sawing be useful there is a new invention come out that is excellent.

I hope our brethren in prison⁶⁰ will soon get out to the joy of the Church,

I hope you, Sister Thompson & child, enjoy good health, we long exceedingly to see you, our love to all our friends—

Tell Brothers Turley⁶¹ & Snider⁶² to write me

Yours in The Gospel

/s/ Wm. Law.

Mr. R[obert] B. Thompson

[on verso:] Write soon and direct as formerly to
Culbertson's P.O.
Mercer Cy
Pa.

If you go out to Preach, just come here it is perhaps as good a place as any, and I will go out with you, should any good preacher come here I could be glad to receive him and would try to preach along with him

Nauvoo Ill.
Nov. 29th 1840,

Bro. Russell
[Far West, Missouri]

Dear Sir

As some of my former Letters have not been answd I thought perhaps you did not get them, and as I can now send you a few lines by Bro. Goodson,⁶³ I tho't I would improve the opportunity.

⁵⁹Wilson Law.

⁶⁰Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Lyman Wight, Caleb Baldwin, and Alexander McRae in Liberty Jail and Parley P. Pratt, King Follett, Morris Phelps, and Luman Gibbs in Boone County Jail, Columbia, Missouri.

⁶¹Theodore Turley.

⁶²John Snyder.

⁶³John Goodson, a Canadian convert who accompanied Heber C. Kimball and others on the British mission in 1837, was influenced by Isaac Russell's apostasy; Goodson himself was excommunicated in 1839.

It is needless for me to express my regret that you remain so long from the Body of the Church, you who have been so very zealous for the cause of Christ, you who have been willing to Sacrifice all things for the building up of the Kingdom in the last days, read the Book of Mormon and you will find that Joseph has not fallen, he has not done his work yet, and if he sins is there no room for repentance, can not God forgive him, and can not we forgive him very often in a day.

I have carefully watched his movements since I have been here,⁶⁴ and I assure you I have found him honest and honourable in all our transactions which have been very considerable I believe he is an honest upright man, and as to his follies let who ever is guiltless throw the first stone at him, I shant do it.

he continues to bring forth the deep mysteries of the Kingdom, and we feast upon them til our souls are made fat, and our hearts rejoice exceedingly. I wish you lived here you would soon change your views of matters and become reconciled. pardon me when I say that I fear some evil spirit has prejudiced your mind and then takes the advantage of you. you now stand opposed to the only organised Church on the Earth, a Church which God now acknowledges by revelations and the gift of his holy Spirit. I know that God has not cast off his people, though there are some wicked amongst them, you know the Kingdom is a net which gathereth of every kind, and the tares are allowed to remain for a time &c.

There never was a time when the Church prospered as much as at present, throughout the world, the good and the honorable of the earth are obeying the gospel and rejoicing in its gifts and blessings why do you keep away from the work of the Lord. You can do nothing where you are, you cannot advance the work of the Lord there, come forth then and submit to the order that God has established, and let your voice be heard amongst the nations, you were once a mighty man, why then be rebellious because of offences, or from any other cause, as to you being cut off from the Church, Joseph disapproved of it with much warmth and wishes you and the rest to appeal at the general assembly of the Church, you would be received here with open arms were you to come back.

I wish you would write me immediately as I want to hear from you. Mr. Good[s]on is here I have not learn'd his business—he starts back today—

My love to your family and all our friends, we are well thanks be to our heavenly Father,

yours

/s/ Wm Law

Give our love to Mary Ann Walton⁶⁵ tell her we get along as usual that the Church is prospering &c. and that we are all well, and would like to see her &c. our love to her mother

W. L.

⁶⁴William Law arrived in Nauvoo in early November 1839.

⁶⁵Daughter of Robert and Isabella Walton.